

51

FARRELL THERESA C
79 KABUL 7876

12/23/81 124220 PRINTER: LI

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 KABUL 07876 01 OF 02 061127Z

ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ADS-00 CIAE-02 IOPE-02 PM-06

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 ICA-11 SES-01 /089 W

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P R 060942Z NOV 79

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6194

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY BEIJING

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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USMISSION USNATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 7876

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: GDS 11-6-85 (FLATIN, BRUCE A.) OR-M

TAGS: PINT PINR PGOV SEUM AF

SUBJ: (C) AFGHANISTAN'S AMIN AND ISLAM

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT.)

2. SUMMARY: IRONICALLY ENJOYING THE MUSLIM EQUIVALENT OF THE "DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS" AUTHORITY, MARXIST-LENINIST STRONGMAN HAFIZULLAH AMIN IS CURRENTLY AVOIDING WITH CARE ANY CONFRONTATION WITH ISLAM IN AFGHANISTAN. THE KHALQIS APPEAR TO BE SATISFIED TO CONCENTRATE ON PROPAGANDIZING THE NATION'S YOUTH, AND TO AWAIT PATIENTLY THE GRADUAL

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PAGE 02 KABUL 07876 01 OF 02 061127Z

DIMINISHMENT OF ISLAM'S ROLE IN THIS SOCIETY. END OF SUMMARY.

3. SINCE HE OVERTHEW FORMER PRESIDENT TARAKI IN MID-SEPTEMBER, AFGHANISTAN'S STRONGMAN, HAFIZULLAH AMIN, HAS MADE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO APPEASE THE CONSERVATIVE ISLAMIC ELEMENTS OF THIS TRADITIONALISTIC SOCIETY. AMIN HAS, FOR EXAMPLE,

ORDERED THAT SEVERAL MOSQUES THROUGHOUT AFGHANISTAN BE "REPAIRED AND WHITENED" (THIS PROJECT IS UNDERFUND, HOWEVER, AND NO RESULTS ARE DISCERNIBLE LOCALLY). HE ALSO HAS PRESIDED WITH STUDIOUS EIGNITY AT IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS EVENTS, SUCH AS THE RECENTLY

CONCLUDED ID-UL-ADHA SERVICES. HIS

GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MEDIA CONSTANTLY REPEAT THE REFRAIN: "THE GREAT KHALQI REVOLUTION IS TOTALLY BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM". AN EXAMPLE CITED OFTEN BY THE KHALQIS IS

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 1

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THEIR ELIMINATION OF USURY IN AGRICULTURAL CREDIT.

4. AMIN HAS ALSO ARRANGED TO HAVE A TAME GROUP OF RELIGIOUS FIGURES CONSTITUTE A "JAMIAT-I-ULAMA" (RELIGIOUS COUNCIL) AND DECLARE HIM "OLELAMAR" OF AFGHANISTAN. AN "OLELAMAR" IS A SECULAR LEADER WHO RULES THROUGH THE AUTHORITY OF ALLAH (A SIMILAR "ULAMA" GROUP HAD SO DESIGNATED TARAKI SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEMISE). ACCORDING TO THE REMARKABLE DECLARATION OF THE "JAMIAT-I-ULAMA," SUBSEQUENTLY "APPROVED WITH ENTHUSIASM" BY PROVINCIAL ULAMAS THROUGHOUT AFGHANISTAN, AMIN'S DECREES MUST BE OBEYED AS "FARZ" -- COMMANDS WHICH HAVE THE FORCE OF DIVINE SANCTION. FAILURE TO OBEY THE "OLELAMAR" CAN RESULT IN THE DEATH PENALTY. A POINT REPEATED FREQUENTLY BY THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AFGHAN MEDIA. THIS "ULAMA" DECISION, IN

ESSENCE, IS ROUGHLY SIMILAR TO THE "DIVINE

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PAGE 03

KABUL 07876 01 OF 22 261127Z

RIGHT OF KINGS" DOCTRINE PROMOTED IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE.

5. IN DECLARING AMIN "OLELAMAR," THE "ULAMA" NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN "BORN A MUSLIM, OF MUSLIM PARENTS". THIS LIMITED FORMULATION GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT THE REGIME IS AVOIDING A COMMITMENT ON THE PRESENT-TENSE SITUATION: IS AMIN NOW A MUSLIM? FOR SOME REASON THE KHALQI LEADER SEEMS UNABLE TO DECLARE SIMPLY, LIKE THE MAJORITY OF HIS COUNTRYMEN: "I AM A MUSLIM." PERHAPS HE IS STILL SUPERSTITIOUS ENOUGH, IN SPITE OF HIS MODERN MARXIST-LENINIST SOPHISTICATION, TO FEAR THAT HE WILL BE STRUCK DEAD IF HE UTTERS THIS PHRASE FALSELY. AMIN INSTEAD LIMITS HIS RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT TO: "I RESPECT ISLAM". THIS DOES NOT, HOWEVER, INHIBIT HIS CHANTING PRAYERS ROUTINELY ON IMPORTANT PUBLIC OCCASIONS, SUCH AS, ALREADY NOTED, AT THE RECENT ID SERVICES.

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79 KABUL 7876

12/23/81 124221 PRINTER: LI

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PAGE 01 KABUL 07876 22 OF 22 061141Z

ACTION NEA-11

INFC OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KABUL 7876

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6. IN SPITE OF THE OBVIOUSLY LUKEWARM RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS. IF ANY, OF AMIN AND OTHERS IN THE KHALQI LEADERSHIP (SEVERAL OF WHOM, FOR EXAMPLE, FSCHW USE OF THE CUSTOMARY RELIGIOUS PHRASES OF GREETING AND FAREWELL), IT IS NOT ACCURATE TO TERM THEM HOSTILE TO ISLAM AT THIS PARTICULAR STAGE OF THEIR REVOLUTION. ALTHOUGH ANTI-REGIME ELEMENTS HAVE DISSEMINATED WIDESPREAD PROPAGANDA ABOUT THE ANTI-ISLAMIC CHARACTER OF THE KHALQIS, THE LATTER HAVE NOT, AS YET, HINDERED AFGHANS FROM PRACTICING THEIR RELIGION FAIRLY FREELY, AS THE KHALQIS ARE SO FOND OF SAYING, "NO MOSQUES HAVE BEEN BURNED IN AFGHANISTAN". (THIS WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DO AT ANY

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PAGE 02 KABUL 27876 22 OF 22 061141Z

RATE, BECAUSE THEY ARE USUALLY MADE OF ADOBE MUI.)

4. AN IMPORTANT KHALQI THFORIST ONCE FRANKLY TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER: "WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO A MULLAH'S BEING ENGAGED EXCLUSIVELY IN THE FIELD OF THEOLOGY; IF, HOWEVER, A MULLAH WERE TO INTERFERE IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, OR SOCIAL AREAS, WE WOULD HAVE TO SMASH HIM". THIS VIEW WAS FURTHER REFLECTED IN AN OCTOBER 21 EDITORIAL IN THE OFFICIAL KABUL TIMES, WHICH STATED ITS PREFERENCE FOR "ENLIGHTENED MULLAHS, THAT IS MULLAHS WHO THINK OBJECTIVELY AND SEE THINGS OBJECTIVELY." THE SHAI' A CLERGY OF AFGHANISTAN, WHO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY OWE ALLEGIANCE TO IRAN'S AYATOLLAH KHOMENI, A SWORN ENEMY OF THE KHALQI REGIME, ARE WATCHED ESPECIALLY CLOSELY IN THIS REGARD.

8. IT HAS BEEN THE GENERAL OBSERVATION OF EMBASSY OFFICERS

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PAGE

3

ARRELL THERESA C
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THAT YOUNG SCHOOL-AGE AFGHANS, WHO ARE NOW UNDER THE THOROUGH-
GOING CONTROL AND TRAINING OF THE KHALQIS, ARE BEING DIS-
CREETLY STEERED AWAY FROM THE DEEP RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT OF
THEIR ELDERS. THE LOCAL MULLAHS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES ARE
FREQUENTLY TOO COWD AND TIMID TO CONFRONT EFFECTIVELY THIS
"CREEPING SECULARIZATION" STRATEGY. THE PARENTS FREQUENTLY
FOLLOW THE LEAD OF THE MULLAHS.

9. COMMENT: AMIN AND HIS COHORTS, PRESUMABLY UNDER SOVIET
ADVICE, CLEARLY INTEND TO AVOID ANY UNNECESSARY HEAD-ON
CONFRONTATIONS WITH ISLAM AT THIS EARLY AND VULNERABLE STAGE
OF THE KHALQI REVOLUTION. AS THE DEEPLY DEVOUT OLDER
GENERATIONS DIE (THE EVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY IN THIS
COUNTRY IS ONLY FORTY), HOWEVER, THE RISING RANKS OF
AFGHAN YOUTH, CONTAINING MANY AMBITIOUS FOR JOBS AND
STATUS, WILL PROBABLY COME TO REGARD RELIGION IN A DISIN-
TERESTED FASHION NOT TOO UNLIKE THAT OF THEIR COUNTER-

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PAGE 03

KABUL 27876 02 OF 02 061141Z
PARTS IN NEIGHBORING REPUBLICS OF SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA.
THE FAITH HERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE EQUIPPED TO CONTEND
WITH THIS CHALLENGE. AFGHANISTAN'S SUNNI ISLAM, FRAG-
MENTED INTO COMPLEX GEOGRAPHIC AND ETHNIC PATTERNS, LACKS
A COHESIVE AND NATIONWIDE STRUCTURE LIKE THAT OF KEOAUB TQYES SHIZAIS #
IN NEIGHBORING IRAN. THE SOME FIFTEEN

PERCENT OF THE AFGHANS WHO ARE SHI'A HAVE RECEIVED, THUS
FAR, LITTLE MORE THAN MORAL SUPPORT FROM THEIR CORELI-
GIONISTS TO THE WEST.

10 IF THE KHALQI REGIME SURVIVES, THE FUTURE LOOKS
BLEAK FOR ISLAM. ALTHOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY TO EXPIRE
AS A FAITH HERE, ISLAM EVENTUALLY WILL NO LONGER BE
PERMITTED TO DOMINATE THE ENTIRE FABRIC OF SOCIETY, AS
IT HAS FOR CENTURIES.

BLOOD

NOTE BY OC/T: KABUL 7876/2. #PARA 9 AS RECEIVED.
CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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